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RHOPTRYRMEX TRANSVERSINODIS, new synonymy of, and
brief characterization
Insecta: Hymenoptera: Formicidae

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COLLECTION

Rhoptryrmex transversinodis Mayr, 1901, Ann. naturh. Hofmus., Wien, 16: 22, worker. Type locality Port Elizabeth, S. Africa (by present selection); other original locality Bothaville, S. Africa. Syntypes in Naturhistorisches Museum, Vienna (and elsewhere) examined 1963. Arnold, 1917, Ann. s. afr. Mus., 14: 355, figs. 112, 113, worker, female, Pretoria, S. Africa.

Rhoptryrmex Steini Forel, 1913, Ann. Soc. ent. Belg., 57: 122, worker. Type locality Ladismith, Cape Province. Syntypes in Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Geneva (and elsewhere), examined 1963. Arnold, 1917, Ann. s. afr. Mus., 14: 357, worker. New synonymy.

Rhoptryrmex transversinodis var. pretoriae Arnold, 1926, Ann. s. afr. Mus., 23: 282, worker, female, male. Type locality Pretoria, S. Africa; other localities M'fongosi, Zululand and Matroosberg, Hex River Mts., S. Africa; paratypes from Matroosberg examined 1963. New synonymy.

Worker easily recognized by its high, narrowly-rounded petiolar node and transverse petiole, which is about twice as broad as long. No ventral postpetiolar process. Body predominantly smooth and shining, color yellow to yellowish-brown.

Female a highly aberrant ant, even as compared to the other known females of the genus, and like them, it varies from locality to locality. The rimmed occipital lobes, overhanging mesonotum, deep, compressed petiole, transverse postpetiole and broad, anteriorly impressed gaster are characters more or less similarly developed in gynae of several ant genera known or suspected to found their colonies asinquilines in the nests of other ants. Most of the adaptations apparently function to protect vital body joints against the mandibles of workers of prospective host species. Females from Pretoria have shining integument rather densely sown with tiny elongate pits, into each of which is fitted a minute, appressed squamiform seta (Arnold thought there were no setae). Erect pilosity or pubescence is lacking. Color darker and more brownish than in corresponding workers. Arnold describes another form of female from Zululand as "clothed with a sparing and fairly long, greyish pubescence, oblique on legs and antennae, decumbent elsewhere. The vertex is exceedingly finely and sparsely punctured, the rest of the body impunctate,

and the shallow elliptical punctures.... are entirely absent."

Distribution: Union of South Africa, widespread but apparently sporadic from southern Cape Province to Transvaal and Zululand.

Synonymy: R. steini is based on rather large workers, and the var. pretoriae on smaller, lighter ones. While some slight allometric differences are to be found among these workers in head shape, form of petiole, etc., the same kind of variation is found in the transversinodis type series. The females are more of a problem. Differences mentioned by Arnold in 1926 as marking the "typical" species and var. pretoriae could indicate the existence of different species, but since the females of the other species of the genus seem equally variable, it seems best to accept the variation as intraspecific until it is better known.

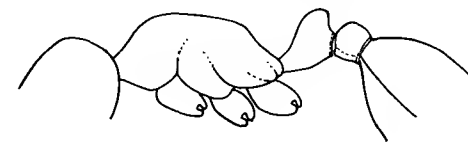


Fig. 1.

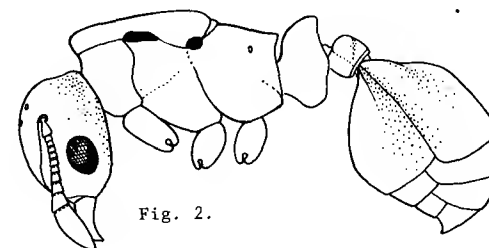


Fig. 2.

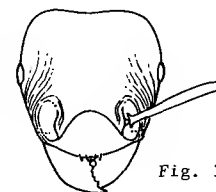


Fig. 3.

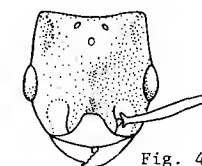


Fig. 4.

Rhoptryrmex transversinodis
Figures 1 and 3, syntype worker.
Figures 2 and 4, ♀, Pretoria.

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